On August 7, 1773, Pope Clement XIV, after four years of stalling, finally acceded to the pressure exerted by the House of Bourbon and its Masonic ministers and suppressed the religious order known as the Society of Jesus throughout the entire world. The Jesuits had already been suppressed civilly in Portugal and France; their suppression by the Church they sought to serve was a move that would have unsuspected consequences for Europe. Scarcely a generation later, not one of the thrones which had collaborated in the suppression of the Jesuits, including the papacy, would be untouched by revolution. The Bourbon king in France would be gone, beheaded by a mob which would soon turn on itself in an orgy of bloodlust that would last well into the nineteenth century and end only with the defeat of Napoleon at the hands of an alliance that would restore monarchy and stability to Europe for 100 years. In spite of that defeat, a new concept had been born, the idea of revolution, and it would haunt the political realm for 200 years thereafter and the cultural realm for even longer than that.

None of this was immediately apparent when the pope acted, of course, and the immediate consequences of the suppression of the Jesuits were more banal. The Masons may have discerned in the suppression their political advantage, but the professors saw advancement of their careers. One of the people who saw his own personal silver lining in the Jesuit cloud was a Bavarian professor by the name of Adam Weishaupt. Weishaupt had been born in Ingolstadt on February 6, 1748, and educated by the Jesuits at the Ingolstadt Gymnasium from the time he was seven until his fifteenth year. Under their tutelage Weishaupt developed a love-hate relationship with the Jesuits that would last him for the rest of his life. It would eventuate in a system of “Seelenanalyse” based on Jesuit spirituality, which would have far reaching consequences.

In 1773, Weishaupt was twenty-five years old and already a professor in the law faculty at the University of Ingolstadt. Eleven years later the Bavarian writer Johannes Pezzl would give one of the few character sketches extant of a man who made a career of analyzing the characters of others. Pezzl described Weishaupt as a “pale, seeming hard and stoic man who was so wrapped up in himself that the only people who ever became close to him were a few fellow academics.”1 With the suppression of the Jesuits, Weishaupt was able to enhance his stature at the university by taking over the
Chair of Canon Law and Practical Philosophy, a chair which had been in the hands of the Jesuits at Ingolstadt for over ninety years, and he was able to do this despite the fact that he was not a theologian.

Weishaupt’s rapid advance seems to have emboldened him to make plans for a career that would go beyond the usual mundane plotting for university advancement. As a first step in insuring that the Jesuits would not return to power at the University at Ingolstadt, Weishaupt began looking into the prospect of joining either the Masons or the other secret societies that flourished at the end of what has been called the century of secret societies. After a few initial inquiries into lodges in both Munich and Nuremberg, Weishaupt was turned off by the exotic mumbo jumbo of their rituals. The same reaction ensued after he made contact with the Rosicrucians of neighboring Burghausen after being introduced to them by some of his students.

Because of his dissatisfaction with the existing secret societies, Weishaupt decided instead to create a secret society of his own to ensure that the Jesuits would not return to Ingolstadt. Perhaps because of the times or because of his own genius in both personnel management and psychological manipulation, Weishaupt’s idea took on a life of its own, one that quickly seemed to demand more room than the confines of the university had to offer. Not that the university was irrelevant to the plan. As a professor, Weishaupt had access to malleable young men into whom he could breathe his anticlerical ideas, and many of his students, intoxicated by the possibilities of the age, were swept into Weishaupt’s secret society. On May 1, 1776, Weishaupt created an organization he called the Club of the Perfectible, whose name was later changed to the Order of the Bees, until it was changed again to the name by which it is remembered today, namely, the Order of the Illuminati.

The significance of the Illuminati lay not in its political effectiveness (it existed a little more than eight years), but rather in its method of internal organization. In borrowing freely from both the Jesuits and the Freemasons, Weishaupt created an extremely subtle system of control based on manipulation of the passions. Borrowing the idea of examination of conscience from the Jesuits and sacramental confession from the Catholic Church to which the Jesuits belonged, Weishaupt created a system of “Seelenspionage” that would allow him to control his adepts without their knowing that they were being controlled.

The Illuminati might have remained the equivalent of a Bavarian fraternity house were it not for the times and Weishaupt’s fortuitous meeting with a northern German aristocrat with extraordinary organizational capabilities. Freemasonry had arrived in the German-speaking world in 1737 when the first German lodge, “Absalom,” was opened at the pub known as the “Englischen Taverne” in Hamburg. Then in the same year the lodge “Aux trois aigles blancs,” was opened in Berlin, followed by “Aux trois globes” in
1740 and “Aux trois canons” in Vienna in 1742. Weishaupt, who had been fascinated by Freemasonry for some time, finally joined the newly created lodge of the strict observance “Zur Behutsamkeit” in Munich in 1777. In 1780, while attending meetings at the Frankfurt lodge “Zur Einigkeit,” Weishaupt met Adolph Freiherr von Knigge, a man four years younger than himself, who immediately fell under Weishaupt’s spell. Von Knigge had joined a Masonic lodge of the “strict observance” in Kassel in 1773, but he, like many of his brother Masons, was dissatisfied with the status quo, which involved elaborate rituals and constant bickering and one group splitting off from the other. In Weishaupt’s Illuminati, von Knigge saw an instrument to bring order out of chaos, one that would reform the increasingly fractious Masonic groups.

Since the conclusion of the Thirty Years War, Germany had been divided up according to the religion of its princes. Von Knigge, who became a member of the Illuminati on July 5, 1778, gave Weishaupt’s essentially Catholic and Bavarian organization access to the Protestant principalities in northern Germany, and as a result of that and von Knigge’s zeal and organizing abilities, membership in the Illuminati took off. Shortly after von Knigge’s entry into the Illuminati, the membership jumped to 500 men throughout Germany. But the numbers tell only half the story. Perhaps because he was an aristocrat himself, von Knigge added to Weishaupt’s following of university students by attracting aristocrats and influential bureaucrats and thinkers from across Germany by clever exploitation of existing Masonic lodges as a pool of recruits.

A crucial event in this regard was the Wilhelmsbad Konvent, a Masonic convention held near Hanau from July 16 to September 1, 1782, which was to have far-reaching consequences not only for lodges of the strict observance but for all of Europe as well. Upon returning from the Wilhelmsbad Congress, Henry de Virieu told a friend who asked him about secret information he might have brought back: “The whole business is more serious than you think. The plot has so carefully been hatched that it’s practically impossible for the Church and the Monarchy to escape.” Wilhelmsbad may or may not have been the place where plans for the French Revolution were hatched, but it was certainly a windfall for the Order of the Illuminati, which began to siphon off significant numbers of Masons into its own organization. As a result of his efforts at Wilhelmsbad, von Knigge was able to persuade a number of prominent Masons to become Illuminati. That number included Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick and his deputy Prince Karl von Hessen-Kassel, a man who also had connections in Schleswig and Holstein. Someone else who joined the Illuminati after meeting von Knigge in Wilhelmsbad was the publisher Johann Joachim Christoph Bode, who brought Illuminism to Weimar where he founded a lodge which would include Goethe, Karl August, the prince of Weimar, and just about all of the leading lights associated
with the German Enlightenment. All in all, it had been an impressive few weeks in Hanau, and now the goal of undermining the lodges of the strict observance and “illuminizing” them, i.e., taking them under secret control, seemed like a plausible idea.

The idea would fail, however, because of strife within the organization. Ironically, it was the Illuminist system of control which led to the break. Von Knigge’s success in recruiting new members led Weishaupt to feel that he was being superseded by his subordinate, which led him in turn to increase the control, which led to more strife with von Knigge, who felt that he was being treated badly. Von Knigge would later claim that he hadn’t joined to take a subordinate role in which he was “expected to take blind orders from some Jesuit General.” According to von Knigge’s account, Spartacus, which was Weishaupt’s Illuminist code name, abused and tyrannized his subordinates and intended “to subjugate mankind to a more malicious yoke than that conceived by the Jesuits.” Eventually the rift became too wide to bridge, and when the Illuminati reached its maximal number of adherents in 1783, it began to unravel.

On July 1, 1784, the Illuminati issued an official expulsion order against von Knigge, which praised, nonetheless, his service in increasing the size of the organization. The expulsion of von Knigge, whose organizational and recruiting abilities had brought the Illuminati to a membership of around 2,000, came at an especially bad time. One week before his official expulsion, on June 22, the Bavaria government issued its first edict forbidding membership in secret societies. Other edicts were to follow on March 2, 1785, and on August 16. On January 2, 1785 the Prince Bishop of Eichstaett demanded that the Prince of Bavaria purge all Illuminati from the University of Ingolstadt. In spite of the secrecy of the Illuminati, Weishaupt was a prime suspect because of the radical Enlightenment books he had ordered for the University library. Weishaupt was removed from his chair of canon law at the University of Ingolstadt on February 11, 1784. Over the next year, the hue and cry against secret societies increased dramatically. Rather than wait for his dismissal to develop into something worse, i.e., criminal prosecution or a hefty fine, Weishaupt fled from Ingolstadt to the neighboring Protestant free city of Regensburg on February 2, 1785. On March 2, when the Prince of Bavaria, Karl Theodore, issued his second edict, the Minerval lodge in Ingolstadt, now without Weishaupt as its head, was dissolved. When the Bavarian government demanded his extradition, and even went so far as to put a reward out for his capture, Weishaupt decided that he had to move again, and in 1787 he fled to the Protestant duchy of Gotha, where he and his family found protection under fellow Illuminatus, Duke Ernst II, who offered him a position on his court council.

If the Bavarian authorities had left it at that, the Illuminati would most probably have been forgotten forever or at best remained a minor footnote in
a very small book. But the Bavarian government, after discovering the secret documents associated with the lodge in Munich, made a fateful decision; they decided to publish what they found and in so doing assured Weishaupt and his conspirators an influence they never could have achieved on their own. In June 1785 certain important papers belonging to Jakob Lanz, a secular priest and Illuminatus close to Weishaupt who had been struck dead by a lightning bolt, were found in the course of going through his effects. These papers testified to the Illuminati’s intention to subvert the Masonic lodges. Then in October 1786 and May 1787 more papers were discovered when the house of the Illuminatus Franz Xaver Zwack was searched after he had been demoted from his position at the court council and sent to Landshut. These papers, which constituted an internal history of the organization, proved the conspiratorial nature of the secret society beyond a doubt. The first batch of documents was published almost immediately on October 12, 1786, causing a furor that would last for years.

Ever since Voltaire became enamored of Newtonian physics during his visit to England during the third decade of the eighteenth century, the thinkers of the Enlightenment had aspired to create a replacement for the Christian social order based on “scientific” principles. “Mankind,” wrote Baron d’Holbach in his influential treatise, The System of Nature, “are unhappy, in proportion as they are deluded by imaginary systems of theology.” It was out of statements like this that the revolutionary program of the eighteenth century was born, for if man is unhappy because of religion, his happiness would ensue automatically if religion were abolished. But in order to do that, the thrones which protected religion had to be abolished too.

As the initial Illuminist documents began to be published, Weishaupt’s revolutionary intent became clear. In his 1782 speech, “Anrede an die neuaufzunehmenden Illuminatos dirigentes,” Weishaupt provided his enemies with clear evidence that this secret society was intent on toppling both throne and altar throughout Europe. Rossberg called the “Anrede” “the heart of Illuminism.” Professor Leopold Alois Hoffman, one of the leading lights in the counterrevolutionary movement, felt that he could trace the “entire French revolution and its most salient events” back to the maxims of the “Anrede.”

But much as the Illuminist papers called for the toppling of throne and altar, the significance of Illuminism did not lie in exhortation. Rather, and this is what the conservative readership found most disturbing, Illuminism seemed to propose an especially effective system which would bring about these ends. Weishaupt had not just issued a manifesto calling for revolution, he had created a system of control that would create disciplined cells which would do the bidding of their revolutionary masters often, it seemed, without the slightest inkling that they were being ordered to do so. Weishaupt’s intentions were clearly revolutionary, but the shocking thing about the
Illuminati was the mechanism whereby he put those intentions into effect by controlling the secret society’s members’ minds. Weishaupt had created an instrument of psychic control which was effective precisely because it did not derive from the mechanistic philosophy of the Enlightenment. “Man,” wrote d’Holbach,

is the work of Nature: he exists in Nature: he is submitted to her laws: he cannot deliver himself from them: nor can he step beyond them even in thought. . . . Man is a being purely physical: the moral man is nothing more than this physical being considered under a certain point of view, that is to say, with relation to some of his modes of action, arising out of his particular organization. . . . His visible actions, as well as the invisible motion interiorly excited by his will or his thoughts, are equally the natural effects, the necessary consequences, of his peculiar mechanism, and the impulse he receives from those beings by whom he is surrounded. . . . His ideas, his will, his actions, are the necessary effects of those qualities infused into him by Nature, and of those circumstances in which she has placed him.  

D’Holbach is proposing a crude materialism here which is at least implicitly an instrument of control. The controlling factor is “Nature,” man’s behavior being a simple expression of Nature’s laws:

The universe, that vast assemblage of every thing that exists, presents only matter and motion: the whole offers to our contemplation nothing but an immense, an uninterrupted succession of causes and effects; some of these causes are known to us, because they strike immediately on our senses; . . . The moral man, is he who acts by physical causes, with which our prejudices preclude us from becoming acquainted.

This train of thought would eventually lead to behaviorism and the development of “brain-washing” and psychotropic drugs, none of which would prove effective, but more importantly, none of these instruments were even remotely available to the revolutionaries who populated secret societies during the eighteenth century. The Enlightenment, as a result, was handicapped in terms of political action by the crudity of its own materialistic psychology.

Weishaupt was smart enough to see through this materialism, even if he espoused the same political revolution the materialists desired. His system was a repudiation of the crude materialism of the most well known Enlightenment thinkers. In his treatise “Pythagoras or the consideration of a secret art of ruling both world and government,” Weishaupt proposed his system as the only possible way to implement the imperatives of the Enlightenment. “Is there any greater art,” he wrote,

than uniting independently thinking men from the four corners of the earth, from various classes, and religions with no impediment to their freedom of thought, and in spite of their various opinions and passions into one permanently united band of men, to infuse them with ardor and to make them so receptive that the greatest distances mean nothing so that
they are equal in their subordination, so that the many will act as one and from their own initiative, from their own conviction, something that no external compulsion could force them to do?8

When his secret society became notoriously public, Weishaupt would describe himself as simply an educator and try to play down his system of control as little more than what any father would try to do in raising his children, but the published documents belied his protestations of innocence. What Weishaupt proposed not only violated the concept of “brotherhood” on which the Masonic lodges were based, his system was based on the organization that was considered the antithesis of Enlightenment. It was based on the Jesuits, or, as Barruel would put it, the Illuminati were a cross between the Jesuits and the Freemasons, in which all of the controls placed on spiritual direction by the Church were lifted and the goal was not to get souls into heaven but to create a paradise on earth. The thing Enlightened thinkers saw in the at-this-point-defunct Jesuits was a machine for control that was superior to any of the mumbo-jumbo that the Masonic lodges had to offer. Illuminism was a machine which stripped the *esprit de corps* of the Jesuit order of all its superstitious accretions and allowed that mechanism to be used to achieve Enlightenment ends. This is precisely what the conservative reaction saw in the Illuminati, and it was precisely this that scared them.

“Anyone who remembers the artificial machine of the former Jesuits,” wrote an indignant writer in the conservative-reactionary journal *Eudemonia* in 1796, “will not find it difficult to rediscover this same machine under another name and with another motive in the Illuminati. The former Jesuits were driven by superstition, and the Illuminati of the present are driven by their unbelief, but the goal of both is the same, the order’s universal domination of all of mankind.”9

It wasn’t the goal of world domination, which, in the popular mind at the time the Illuminati shared with the Jesuits that the public found as upsetting; it was the means whereby the Illuminati were going to achieve those goals. Weishaupt took the idea of examination of conscience and sacramental confession from the Jesuits and, after purging them of their religious elements, turned them into a system of intelligence gathering, spying, and informing, in which members were trained to spy on each other and inform their superiors. Weishaupt introduced what he called the *Quibus Licet* notebooks, in which the adept was encouraged to bare his soul for the inspection of his superiors. Weishaupt said of the *Quibus Licet* books that they were “identical to what the Jesuits call confession,” and he told Zwack that he “borrowed the idea from the Jesuit sodalities, where each month you went over your *bona opera* in private.”10 When Utzschneider broke with the Illuminati, he revealed much the same thing:

The adept sends these monthly reports to the provincial under the title of *Quibus Licet*, to the provincial under the title *Soli* and to the general of the
entire order under the title Primo. Only the superiors and the general know the details which are discussed there because all of these letters are transmitted to and fro among the minor superiors. In this way the superiors get to know everything that they want to know.11

We can see in the Quibus Licet system the vague outline of the system of spying which would become part and parcel of Communist system of control, both of the underground cells, before they took over a country, and as part of the police state based on spying that was erected after they had taken power. But the Illuminist system of control which Weishaupt created went deeper than that. In addition to creating a system where members spied on each other, Weishaupt created a technique of what came to be called “Seelenspionage,” or spying on the soul, whereby the superiors in the Illuminati could get access to the adept’s soul by close analysis of the seemingly random gestures, expressions, or words that betrayed the adept’s true feelings. Von Knigge, who was privy to the system, referred to it as a “Semiotik der Seele.”

“When the comparisons of all these characteristics,” von Knigge wrote, “even those which seem the smallest and least significant, one can draw conclusions which have enormous significance for knowledge of human beings, and gradually draw out of that a reliable semiotics of the soul.”12

As part of the systemization of this semiotics, Weishaupt, not unlike Alfred Kinsey 150 years later, developed a chart and a code to document the psychic histories of the various members of the Illuminist cells. In his book on the Illuminati, van Duelman reprints the case history of Franz Xaver Zwack of Regensburg. In it we see a combination of the Kinsey sexual history, the Stasi file, and credit rating all rolled up into one document whose purpose is control. In neat columns, the superiors in the Illuminati can learn where the adept was born, his physical characteristics, his aptitudes, his friends, and his reading material, as well as when he was inducted into the order and his code name. Under the heading “Morals, character, religion, conscientiousness,” we learn that Zwack had a “soft heart” and that he was “difficult to deal with on days when he was melancholy.” Under “Principle Passions,” we read that Zwack suffered from “pride, and a craving for honors” but that he was also “honest but choleric with a tendency to be secretive as well as speaking of his own perfection.” For those who want to know how to control Zwack, Massenhausen (code name Ajax) says that he got best results by couching all of his communications with Zwack in a mysterious tone.

Once the Illuminist manuscripts were published, the educated public was both appalled and fascinated by what they discovered. They were appalled by the sinister intervention of revolutionaries like Weishaupt into the most intimate recesses of the soul, but they were also fascinated by the horizons of control these discoveries opened before them. Wieland saw in the
Illuminati the basis for pedagogical and political reform. Which was of course, the way Weishaupt saw things too. His goal was the creation of a social order consistent with both Enlightenment science and the notion of a citizen as emancipated from the control of princes who acted *in loco parentis*. “The truly enlightened man,” Weishaupt wrote, “has no need of a master.” Man will be well governed only when “he is no longer in need of government.” In this respect Weishaupt’s system had remarkable similarities with nascent American republic, whose Declaration of Independence was proclaimed a little over two months after Weishaupt founded the Illuminati. The American system was the Enlightenment as implemented by English Protestants; the Illuminati, the same philosophy as implemented by Bavarian Catholics. Both felt that man had reached a stage of maturity wherein princes were obsolete. Man, having achieved Enlightenment, could now govern himself.

The fatal flaw of this and other Enlightenment schemes is that it claimed to do away with the morals associated with religion. In America, the principles of the Enlightenment were ameliorated by the refusal to establish a state religion, an idea which eventually came to be known, based on a quote from a letter from Thomas Jefferson, as the separation of Church and state. In the absence of state religion and a centralized Enlightenment government of the sort that would be implemented in France in the not-too-distant future, the various churches were free to form the citizenry according to their various lights, and, as a result, the vacuum at the heart of Enlightenment morals did not lead to social chaos, as it would in France.

But the principle was clear for anyone with eyes to see and a sense of history formed by Plato’s judgment in *The Republic* that democracy invariably led to tyranny. The Enlightenment appeal to liberty invariably led to the suppression of religion, which led to the suppression of morals, which led to social chaos. This meant that those who espoused the Enlightenment with any circumspection would also have to be interested in mechanisms of social control, since the erosion of morality which invariably accompanied the proclamation of “freedom” necessitated it. Freedom followed by Draconian control became the dialectic of all revolutions, and, in this regard, the sexual revolution was no exception. In fact, revolution and sexual revolution were, if not synonymous, then certainly contemporaneous, and in fact, the latter was inseparable from the former. Once the passions were liberated from obedience to the traditional moral law as explicated by the Christian religion, they had to be subjected to another more stringent, perhaps “scientific” form of control in order to keep society from falling apart. Social control was a necessary consequence of liberation, something which the French Revolution would make obvious. It was the chaos stemming from the French revolution, in fact, which would inspire Auguste Comte to come up with the “science” of sociology, which was in its way an ersatz religion but most im-
portantly a way of bringing order out of chaos in a world which no longer found the religious foundation of morals plausible.

It was Weishaupt’s genius to come up with a system of control that proved effective in the absence of religious sanction. In this regard, Weishaupt’s system would become the model of every secular control mechanism of both the left and the right for the next two hundred years. Weishaupt was smart enough to see that “reason” of the sort proposed by the Masonic lodges of the strict observance would never bring about social order. Morals, cut off from their ontological source, became associated as a result with the will of the man who understood the mechanism of control. Since, as the chaos in the lodges of the Strict Observance showed, reason led more often than not to conflicting ideas of which program to take, the Illuminist system had to take the law into its own hands and program behavior as its leaders saw fit. In this Illuminism followed the typical trajectory of every other form of Enlightenment social science which would come into being over the next two hundred years. As in the case of Comte’s sociology, the old church was replaced with a new church. The old order, which was based on nature and tradition and revelation, was replaced by a new totalitarian order which was based on the will of those in power. The break-up of the Illuminati and the defection of von Knigge, who found the new order more intolerable than the one he was trying to destroy, showed that this new order was not without its own problems, but faith in ever-more-effective technologies of control, based on newer technologies of communication, would push this disillusionment further and further into the future.

_Nosce te ipsum, nosce alios_ (“know thyself, know others”) was the motto which Weishaupt lifted from the oracle at Delphi. The Illuminati were also a concrete manifestation of Bacon’s dictum that knowledge was power. In this instance, knowledge of the inner life of the adept was translated into power over him. Extrapolated to the state that functioned according to Illuminist principles, that knowledge translated into political power. What Weishaupt proposed was a technique of noncorporal compulsion, as formerly practiced by the Jesuits, but now in the service of a secular utopia which knew none of the restraints the Church placed on the Society of Jesus. In those controlling these “Maschinenmenschen,” both Weishaupt and von Knigge caught first sight of a machine state which created order though its invisible control over its citizens.

Even if Weishaupt and von Knigge failed to implement that vision, the publication of their papers by the Bavarian authorities insured that others would at least have the ultimate fulfillment of that project to entertain. Once released into the intellectual ether, the vision of machine people in a machine state controlled by Jesuit-like scientist controllers would capture the imagination of generations to come, either as utopia in the thinking of people like Auguste Comte or dystopia in the minds of people like Aldous Huxley and
Fritz Lang, whose film *Metropolis* seemed to be Weishaupt’s vision come to life. Like Gramsci, Weishaupt proposed a cultural revolution more than a political revolution. Weishaupt wanted to “surround the mighty of this earth” with a legion of men who would run his schools, churches, cathedrals, academies, book stores and governments, in short a cadre of revolutionaries who would influence every instance of political and social power, and so over the long run educate the society to Enlightenment ideas. Van Duelman notices the connection between the cultural revolution which Weishaupt proposed via the Illuminati and the “march through the institutions” which the ’68ers brought about less than two hundred years later. The rise of Communism obscured the fact that for the first hundred years or so following the French Revolution, Illuminism was synonymous with revolution both in theory and practice. It was in practice, however, that Illuminism made its major contribution. In this one small organization we see virtually all of the psychological control mechanisms of both the left and the right in nuce. In Illuminism we find in seminal form the system of police state spying on its citizens, the essence of psychoanalysis, the rationale for psychological testing, the therapy of journal keeping, the idea of Kinsey’s sex histories, the spontaneous confessions at Communist show trials, Gramsci’s march through the institutions, the manipulation of the sexual passion as a form of control that was the basis for advertising, and, via Comte, the rise of the “science” of behaviorism, which attempts, in the words of John B. Watson, to “predict and control behavior.” As the last instance makes clear, the one thing which all of these technologies have in common is their desire for control. Weishaupt’s system was a system of control, and it was both the dream of the Enlightenment and its only consistent project to expand and refine the technology of social control which Weishaupt envisaged in rudimentary form 200 years ago.

Like so many who would come after him, Weishaupt sought to create a technology of control to take the place of self-control, which he himself lacked. At least part of the outrage which surrounded the publication of the Illuminist manuscripts had to do with the disparity between the morality which Weishaupt preached and the depravity of his actions. Weishaupt became involved in an affair with his sister-in-law, and when she became pregnant, he tried to cover up his involvement by procuring an abortion. It was this behavior which led Prince Karl Theodore of Bavaria to denounce Weishaupt as a “villain, perpetrator of incest, child murder, seducer of the people, and leader of a conspiracy which endangered both religion and the state.” The terminology is extreme, but no more extreme than his actions deserved, and no more extreme than the ideology Weishaupt sought to put into effect. The prince was right in seeing Weishaupt as representing the antithesis of the Christian state, and the essence of this antithesis was the idea of control, the desire to dominate rather than serve which Augustine termed *libido dominandi*. If the Christian faith held as its ideal – no matter how far it
strayed from that ideal in praxis – the idea of loving service, then the revolution-ary antithesis of that ideal could only be domination. Just what the most effective means to achieve that domination were could and would be worked out in detail over the next two hundred years. Weishaupt, however, made a significant first step in this regard by defining the terms, terms which would be definitive. The battle for liberation would be both a semantic battle and a battle for control of the soul, and control would remain the essence of revolutionary praxis, no matter how much the term *freedom* was used to justify its opposite.

In 1787, the same year that Weishaupt fled to Gotha, Bode, who had now become de facto leader of the Illuminati in exile, traveled to Paris where he met with members of the Paris lodge “Les Amis Reunis,” and held long discussions, during which, according to his own account in his travel diary, he tried to interest them in the techniques and doctrines of Illuminism. Whether he succeeded or not is a matter of debate. The fact that the French Revolution broke out two years after his arrival led many to believe that he had succeeded in successfully transplanting Bavarian Illuminism to French soil and that the French was the first of many revolutions that would follow until neither a throne nor an altar would be left standing in once-Christian Europe. “The French,” wrote Professor Leopold Alois Hoffmann of Vienna, one of the main counter-revolutionaries of his day, “didn’t invent the project of world revolution. This honor belongs to the Germans. To the French belongs only the honor of making a beginning. . . . The *Comites politiques* came into existence following on the heels of Illuminism, which came into being in Germany and became that much more dangerous because it was never extinguished there but merely went underground and then gave birth to the Jacobin clubs.”

Bode died in 1793, and by 1795 it seems that all activity associated with the Illuminati as a coherent organization ceased, even though Weishaupt would continue to collect his pension in Gotha and write books until 1830. Bode’s trip to Paris, no matter what its immediate effect, gave birth to what has come to be known as the conspiracy theory, according to which one organization promoted revolution from the time of the Illuminati all the way up to the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. Wilson calls that idea “ridiculous.” But the transmission of the idea of a science of control, based on the subsequent meditation on ideas proposed in their original form by the Illuminists and transmitted by the very forces which opposed them, is not ridiculous. Far from being that, it is in many ways the intellectual history of the next 200 years.